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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 602

By Springer

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Dennis Glisson, Jason Collins, Wallace Parrish, Wayne Ellison, Matt Dill, Jeff Stone, and Johnny Wilkerson for their meritorious service.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that this legislative body honor those persons who through their personal endeavors are credits to their country, their respective families and communities, and to this state; and

WHEREAS, our country was conceived by individuals willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure that the well-being of others is maintained, and in so doing have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, Dennis Glisson, Jason Collins, Wallace Parrish, Wayne Ellison, Matt Dill, Jeff Stone, and Johnny Wilkerson have served with courage and gallantry and deserve proper recognition for their heroic efforts; and

WHEREAS, on August 2, 1999, Warren and Wanda Choate, along with Warren's brother Darrell and his wife, Carolyn, were enjoying the day on Kentucky Lake in their 17-foot hydra bass boat; and

WHEREAS, as the boaters approached the New Johnsonville bridge at 9:30 P.M., the boat abruptly capsized; and

WHEREAS, Warren and Wanda attempted to swim to shore and Darrell and Carolyn clung to the overturned but floating boat; and

WHEREAS, when Warren and Wanda could not reach the shore, the two couples desperately cried out for help; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Dennis Glisson, a CSX railroad drawbridge operator, heard the cries of the Choates and searched several times to locate the distressed voices; and

WHEREAS, he finally saw the boat as it floated under the bridge and immediately called the New Johnsonville Sheriff's Department; and

WHEREAS, Officer Jason Collins received the emergency call, and within minutes was running across the high tracks to the railroad office where he met Wallace Parrish who was coming on duty for CSX; and

WHEREAS, prevailing over the dark night, the two men located Warren and Wanda, who were clinging to a concrete bridge pier under the train tracks; Officer Collins and Mr. Parrish threw a lifesaver water preserver to the stranded couple and instructed them to wrap themselves in the rope while they tied the preserver to the bridge; and

WHEREAS, Warren and Wanda were temporarily secured as Officer Collins then rushed to the home of an off-duty colleague, Officer Wayne Ellison; and

WHEREAS, realizing the urgency of the situation, Officer Ellison knew that it would be too dangerous to wait for the rescue squad, he decided to launch his own private boat to save the Choates; and

WHEREAS, at the boat dock, Officer Ellison and Officer Collins were joined by Jeff Stone and Matt Dill, with the ambulance service; and

WHEREAS, the four men immediately departed shore in order to save the terrified Choates who had been in the water for close to an hour; and

WHEREAS, Wanda and Warren were rescued from the bridge pier, and Darryll and Carolyn were found adrift about a mile down the river; and

WHEREAS, the four capsized victims were exhausted from treading water for such a long time in the choppy conditions; fortunately, they were all conscious and extremely grateful that the shocking ordeal was over; and

WHEREAS, the outstanding efforts to assist the Choates did not end there; a tug boat from the Sand and Gravel Company, expertly operated by Johnny Wilkerson, was called and successfully retrieved the overturned boat; and

WHEREAS, the boat was towed to shore; the rescue team and other generous bystanders turned the boat upright and loaded it on Mr. Choate's boat trailer; and

WHEREAS, these incredible and humble men served with great bravery and ability; they shrug off any recognition for their heroic efforts to save the lives of the Choates; and

WHEREAS, they performed with the utmost skill, selflessness, and professionalism; the Choates are very thankful to their rescuers, and to the Lord for sending these guardian angels to protect them; and

WHEREAS, the service of the men can only be categorized as outstanding. We are especially grateful to them for saving the life of one of our own, Mrs. Wanda Choate, who works for the Chief Engrossing Clerk of the House of Representatives; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby honor and commend Dennis Glisson, Jason Collins, Wallace Parrish, Wayne Ellison, Matt Dill, Jeff Stone, and Johnny Wilkerson for their meritorious service in saving the lives of four Tennesseans and offer our thanks for a difficult job well done.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.